

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

and the first of these, at least, was a man of some fame in those days.

William Flete was an Englishman from Cambridge, who had settled down among the Augustinian hermits at Lecceto, led, perhaps, to that spot by his acquaintance with Giovanni Tantucci, who had probably been his fellow-student by the banks of Cam. In Catherine's circle these two scholars were usually spoken of by their academic degrees, Giovanni being the " Master," and William the " Bachelor." In the wood of ilexes, he led a life more austere than his rule enjoined upon him ; devoting himself to works of penance and to study ; avoiding all intercourse with outsiders, and associating but little with the other friars, returning only to the convent in the evening or for the offices of the Church.¹

It is clear from one of Catherine's letters to him that it seemed to her that the good hermit of England attached too much importance to mortification for its own sake. There are those, she tells him, *' who have set their desire more in mortifying the body than in slaying their own will. These are fed at the table of penance, and are good and perfect; but, if they have not a great humility and do not take consolation in judging according to the will of God and not according to that of men, they often mar their perfection by making themselves judges of those who do not go by the same road as they. And this befalls them because they have set more zeal and desire in mortifying the body than in slaying their own will. Such as these ever wish to choose times and places and mental consolations in their own way, as also the tribulations from the world and the assaults of the demon ; saying, to deceive themselves, being deceived by their own will (which is called spiritual will) : ' I would have this consolation, and not these assaults and turmoils of the demon ; not, indeed, for my own sake, but to please and possess God more, because it seems to me that I possess Him better in this way than in that.'

¹ Cf. *Memorie di Ser Cristofano*, etc., p. 34.

William Flete had previously known Giovanni Colombini, who sends a message to him and to the prior, *Letters . Giovanni Colombini*, So.